



# Management on the Peshtigo River State Forest

By Sara Pearson, Peshtigo River State Forest Ranger

“So, what exactly *do* you do?” I can’t tell you how many people ask that question when I tell them I am the Ranger/Assistant Property Manager of the Peshtigo River State Forest (PRSF). My quick answer is, “I maintain, range, and administrate the state forest.” In my longer answer I include my duties of managing the PRSF- 5,300 acres of former Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) hydroelectric lands along the Peshtigo River and its flowages. The forest is growing too, and later this year approximately 450 acres will be added to the forest. Then in 2004, the remaining 3400 acres of WPS land will be added to include 9,200 acres total!

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Historically, when this land was under WPS ownership, it was open to public recreation and actively managed for timber and wildlife habitat. Today, it continues to remain open as the PRSF! The state forest is open to a variety of public activities: hunting, hiking, horseback riding, canoeing, canoe camping, fishing and boating, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing, among other things. The forest currently maintains 6 boat landings around Caldron Falls, High Falls, and the Potato Rapids. A major winter project for the forest staff was making signs for these landings, which you may see as you are in the area. The property encompasses a very large area, and we are currently spending considerable time investigating special resources, needs or problems in the forest. We will also be posting our boundaries, which will not only help us in knowing where our property is, but it will help you to know that you are on state land. As we explore, we have been finding an increasing number of trespassing and encroachment issues that we will clear up. Until the Master Plan for the forest is completed, we cannot do a lot of work in terms of development. We have been trying to maintain the property to the same standard that WPS had done in the past. Replacing gates or barriers, working on the cross-country ski trails, maintaining the roads into the fly fishing area, and clearing out the canoe campsites are some examples of these maintenance activities. Also as a certified law enforcement officer in the state of Wisconsin, I enforce all Wisconsin Administrative codes and state statutes on the PRSF property.

The PRSF is designated a “northern state forest,” just like the Brule and Black River State Forests are. Whereas both State Parks and State Forests are in the DNR, their purposes under state law, as well as their management and recreation styles differ. One of the key differences is that state parks emphasize more developed camping experiences - modern bathroom facilities and electrical campsites, as well as more intensive trail and recreational areas. Northern state forests emphasize rustic campgrounds with pit toilets, remote camping and recreation such as hunting and snowmobiling. Northern forests, like state wildlife areas, are more actively managed for specific habitats than are state parks which occurs through timber harvest, planting, prescribed burning activities. State Forests also use timber harvest to help create specific habitat for game or rare species in addition to being a source of revenue.

That’s the long answer to what I do in my job. Since this is a new property, and the PRSF staff is relatively new, we are continually learning. However, we’re excited to be able to provide a state forest in this area and look forward to serving you.

